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ABSTRACT

The study reported in this symposium created a profile of teacher education graduates which raises issues related to teacher professionalism and teacher retention in the field. A common teacher education follow-up survey instrument was administered to beginning professionals from seven different universities in five states. Data were gathered from graduates in the following areas: employment history, ratings of program quality, professional knowledge, competence in selected teaching skills, views of teaching, and demographic information. Comparative data analysis presents a description of who our teacher education graduates are and where they going, and it raises some issues for further investigation. First, there is the basic issue of where and how teacher education graduates practice; second, data from this study present a picture that reflects current practice, not its enhancement or improvement. A final issue is related to the nature of practice and asks about the relationship between current teacher education reform efforts and the profile of graduates and about the possibility of the profile changing as programs change. Three tables--Ratings of Knowledge and Skills, Orientations to Teaching, and Early Stages of Professional Careers--are appended. (LL)

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WHO ARE OUR TEACHER EDUCATION GRADUATES, AND WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

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WHO ARE OUR TEACHER EDUCATION GRADUATES, AND WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

Today's graduates will be tomorrow's school leaders. The 1992 theme of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education conference asks, "Where are we going? Who will lead us there?" This study addresses these future-oriented questions with empirical data from recent teacher education graduates. Knowledge of their opportunities and orientations, strengths and weaknesses must inform teacher education for the future. The objectives of this symposium are to present a profile of baccalaureate teacher education graduates from seven different universities in five states and to raise issues of teacher professionalism and of retention in the field:

1. Professional Knowledge and Skills
2. Orientations to Teaching, and
3. Early Stages of Professional Careers.

The symposium is organized into three presentations, each addressing one of these themes.

A profile of professional knowledge and skills, orientations to teaching, and beginning professional careers is particularly timely. National initiatives in the areas of teacher certification and assessment, for example, make necessary a look at the results of teacher education across institutions. Once students graduate from a particular program, they take their places in a pool of teachers who must first compete for jobs and then work together. The goal of teacher education is bigger than any one university: educating teachers to do their professional best for their students in various settings.

This study presents comparable data from seven different universities' teacher education graduates. Thus it allows for the creation of a profile of a beginning professional that is broader than one created from a single university's follow-up study. The data were analyzed at the university level, so the profile can be controlled for university effects. The teacher education issues raised by the profile are therefore more specific than the concerns that would be raised by a general survey of teachers. Although the teacher education universities in the sample differed widely, they were volunteers and not a random sample, so the results of the study do not necessarily generalize to all universities. The profile results are more appropriately used to raise issues than to settle them. This is the focus of the symposium.

Method

Instrumentation. A common teacher education follow-up survey instrument was constructed in the following manner. A panel of evaluators from ten teacher education institutions collected existing follow-up surveys to serve as an item pool for examination. Items drawn from this collection were edited, and new questions were written to address deficiencies in the overall compendium of items (see Freeman, 1988). A pilot instrument was then drafted and resubmitted to the panel for review, including a consideration of content validity, item clarity, and survey length. The resulting instrument, called the National Survey of Teacher Education Graduates, gathers data from graduates in the following areas: (a) employment history, (b) ratings of program quality, (c) ratings of professional knowledge, (d) ratings of competence in selected teaching skills,

(e) views of teaching, and (f) demographic information (Loadman, Brookhart, & Freeman, 1990). In pilot test analyses, internal consistency reliability of subscales has ranged from .74 to .89 (Loadman et al., 1990). Construct validity of items was examined by matching pilot results to findings of other studies, where applicable, and by noting conceptual consistencies in responses; for example, graduates who said they regret not teaching were also likely to say they would major in education if they made their college choices all over again (Brookhart, Loadman, & Freeman, 1989).

Samples. Respondents were baccalaureate teacher education graduates from seven different universities in five states. Data collection occurred in 1988-91 as part of regular follow-up surveys at these universities, which volunteered to participate in the study. Among the seven samples were both private and public institutions in both urban and rural settings. The universities also varied in size. Sample sizes ranged from 64 to 521; the total number of respondents from all seven universities was 1601. Response rates ranged from 39% to 73%. Six universities surveyed graduates within their first three years after graduation, and one university sample included up to fifteenth-year graduates. There were no differences beyond the obvious (i.e., age, years of work experience) by graduation year, and so the data were aggregated for analysis.

Analysis. For each item, frequencies and percentages of response choices were calculated for each university sample separately and for the total respondent pool. Chi-square tests of homogeneity of response choice with respect to university were done for each item.

Professional Knowledge and Skills

The results described in Table I combine to produce a profile of teacher education graduates' perceived professional knowledge and skills, i.e., what they feel they know and can do as they begin their professional practice. Graduates' self-reported adequacy of (1) knowledge in 13 specific teacher education content areas and (2) skills in performing 22 particular teaching functions varied from weak to strong. Graduates overall reported themselves strong in lesson planning, teaching basic skills, enhancing student self-worth, and other traditional areas of teacher education and teaching practice. Graduates reported themselves weak in using computers in instruction, using cooperative learning techniques, working with mainstreamed students, and working with gifted students, all areas of more recent concern in teacher education and teaching. Planning and implementing a successful first week of school was also reported as a weakness. Graduates reported their knowledge and skills in other areas as adequate. This profile held in general but differed significantly in degree by university. These data are consistent with perceptions of student teachers and university supervisors surveyed in AACTE's RATE IV survey (1991, pp. 32-33), where instructional planning and teaching methods were reported as areas of strength, while teaching with computers and dealing effectively with learning disabled students were reported as areas of weakness. These reports, too, differed by type of institution (RATE IV, 1991).

Issues for teaching and teacher education are implicit in these results.

Areas for improvement are precisely the areas where current need and interest are greatest, change in these areas is apparently slow and difficult, and until teacher preparation "catches up" in nontraditional areas, these remain priority topics for inservice education. In 1982, Houston and Newman described the components of traditional teacher education programs as typically including history and philosophy of education, methods of planning and carrying out lessons, and student assessment. Less frequently addressed were multicultural issues or teaching students with special needs (Houston & Newman, 1982). AACTE's recent volume on the knowledge base for the beginning teacher includes a chapter outlining basic information about students with special needs that beginning teachers ought to know (Reynolds, 1989). This content knowledge and related experiences have not yet found a solid place in teacher education programs.

Orientations to Teaching

Orientations to teaching are important because they affect decisions about when and why to use knowledge and skills in teaching (Porter & Brophy, 1987) and teachers' levels of participation in educational reforms and innovations (Cuban, 1984). Responses presented in Table II form a profile of graduates' views about teachers, students, and learning. Two issues emerge from these results.

(1) There is an apparent inconsistency in graduates' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of teachers. Graduates said they believe they can reach even the most difficult students. Graduates chose enhancing students' sense of self-worth as the major criterion for success in teaching and felt they were strongly skilled in that area (see Table I). However, for the sources of both student behavior problems and academic failure they cited student or parent (not teacher) failures or inadequacies. Previous research on teaching indicates teachers who take responsibility for student achievement are likely to be more effective teachers than those who do not (Ashton & Webb, 1986). One possible interpretation of these data is disturbing: it may be that teacher education graduates are more willing to accept responsibilities for successes than for failures (cf. Guskey, 1980). It may be desirable to deal directly with that issue in student teaching seminars or similar reflective components of teacher education programs.

(2) The results of this study also give evidence that teachers believe lower-order skills are prerequisites for higher-order thinking. This is problematic, since it may lead well-meaning teachers to drill lower achieving students in basic skills and not provide opportunities for them to practice higher-order thinking skills (Lanier & Sedlak, 1989; Resnick & Klopfer, 1989). Graduates also reported feeling strongly prepared and knowledgeable in both child development and learning theory (see Table I), so their perception of lockstep order may be resistant to change. In addition, graduates reported being more skilled at teaching basic skills than at teaching conceptual thinking. It is necessary to change these orientations in order to make progress in the education of the urban poor and other special needs students (Means & Knapp, 1991).

Early Stages of Professional Careers

The profiles of teacher education graduates' professional knowledge and skills and orientations to teaching were similar across the seven universities in this study. Sample differences did exist, but they were differences in degree rather than in kind, for example, the modal response for graduates from each university to the question of reaching all students was a qualified yes, although the exact percentage differed by institution. In contrast, teacher education graduates from different universities did report substantially different employment histories, summarized in Table III. The pattern of employment (setting, geographical location, size and type of school, pupil diversity) differs, even though graduates' knowledge, skills, and orientations are similar. Some universities prepare most of their graduates to teach within 50 miles of their high school or university (or both), while some send the majority of their graduates to far locations. The setting (urban, suburban, or rural), school type, and school size of graduates' current teaching positions differs by university, and this will affect the nature of the work the graduates must do. While the knowledge and skills needed for teaching are similar in urban and rural areas, the way in which graduates must apply these skills may differ (Bredemeier, 1988; Means & Knapp, 1991). Teacher preparation should expose students to representative student populations (Meade, 1991). How well prepared teachers are for their particular situations, with respect to knowledge, skills, and orientations to teaching, can influence both quality of professional practice and retention in the field.

In the 1990 RATE IV survey, 80% of preservice teachers reported they would prefer hometown teaching positions. Seventy-five percent reported they would go within 50 miles of their hometowns or colleges, but only 30 percent would look for a position nationally. The RATE IV study also found that, as in previous studies in the series, 76% of the students reported they would prefer to teach in suburban or town settings (RATE IV, 1991, p. 28). The data in Table III suggest that while many students do get their preferred location, within 50 miles of their hometown or college, in some universities that is not the case. The location of the university is an important factor. Many students do not find employment in suburbs or towns, either; Table III indicates only 37% do so.

It is interesting to consider geography as a variable in understanding teaching career patterns. Most research on career patterns in teaching has not looked at geography as one of the primary variables. More common variables in this research are measures of job satisfaction, salary, and academic ability (Hafner & Owings, 1988; Roberson, Keith, & Page, 1983). These data suggest that inquiry into teachers' familiarity with and expectations for the settings in which they work might contribute to current research about beginning teachers and their adjustments to their new work.

Discussion

This description of who our teacher education graduates are and where they go raises some issues. First, there is the basic issue of where and how teacher education graduates practice. They seek jobs near their homes and rely on traditional teaching skills. This raises a second issue: the data from this study present a picture that reflects current practice, not enhancement or

improvement of current practice. A third issue is related to the nature of practice issue. What is the relationship between current teacher education reform efforts and this profile of graduates? Will this profile change substantially as programs change? Cross-institutional follow-up data from the National Survey of Teacher Education Graduates could be used in an inquiry mode to investigate these issues and inform practice.

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Table I -- Knowledge and Skills
Percent of Respondents from Seven Universities
Rating Knowledge and Skills as Weak, Adequate, or Strong

Adequacy of Knowledge				Adequacy of Skills				
Area	Weak	Adeq	Strong	Area	Weak	Adeq	Strong	
Mathematics	15	49	36	Plan lessons	9	44	47	
Social sciences	17	52	31	Motivate students	12	49	39	
Natural sciences	18	54	28	Teach basic skills	4	35	60	
Language arts	7	38	54	Teach higher order	17	53	30	
Visual/perf. arts	27	47	26	Use educ. media	12	47	41	
Multicult. issues	25	51	23	Use computers	62	25	13	*
Devel. of thought in major field	13	53	34	Refer students	32	47	21	*
Contemp. ed. issues	13	58	30	Work w/gifted	42	42	16	*
Learning theory	11	52	38	Work w/mainstreamed	43	38	20	*
Child development	8	47	45	Work w/cult. diversity	27	52	21	
Social/polit. roles of schools	18	59	24	Adapt instruction	15	52	33	
Classroom management	20	40	40	Enhance self-worth	5	38	58	
Teachers' legal/ethical responsibilities	21	51	28	Monitor & adjust	10	48	42	
				Measure achievement	11	56	33	
				Communicate w/parents	24	43	32	
				Use community resource	29	47	24	
				Use coop. learning	38	38	25	*
				Respond to disruption	23	46	31	
				Assess expectations (community & admin.)	27	54	18	
				Represent concepts in a variety of ways	10	46	44	
				Plan 1st wk. of school	31	40	28	*
				Reflect/improve tchg.	8	49	43	

* More than 30% of respondents report a weakness.

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Table II -- Orientations to Teaching
Number and Percent of Respondents to Selected Items, and University Variation

To what extent did views of the roles and responsibilities of teachers change during program?

	n	%	range of %s
A lot	310	22	14 -- 36
Some	586	41	22 -- 55
Not much	377	26	8 -- 36
Not at all	163	11	2 -- 28
	1436	100	

Criterion most likely to be considered when assessing success as a teacher. Students...

	n	%	range of %s
like/respect me	48	5	4 -- 11
learn what I teach	377	37	35 -- 46
gain self-conf.	574	57	41 -- 59
get along w/others	8	1	0 -- 3
	1007	100	

Most frequent source of student behavior problems in classroom settings

	n	%	range of %s
teacher planning	346	25	17 -- 36
tch. failure to estab. cl. envir.	101	7	2 -- 16
outside problems	392	29	21 -- 34
home-school conflict	420	31	24 -- 35
no parent support	101	7	0 -- 15
	1360	99	

Do you believe you can reach even the most difficult or least motivated students?

	n	%	range of %s
yes	448	33	35 -- 41
no	56	4	2 -- 7
qualified yes	751	56	51 -- 60
qualified no	98	7	2 -- 9
	1353	100	

Most frequent source of student failure to achieve intended goals and objectives

	n	%	range of %s
home background	137	14	11 -- 15
student indifference	440	45	41 -- 53
parents	80	8	4 -- 14
teachers' methods	140	14	11 -- 19
tch not adapt instr	189	19	15 -- 24
	986	100	

Some argue students learn best when they have to figure things out themselves. Agree?

	n	%	range of %s
yes	167	12	8 -- 16
yes, w/prior skills	1086	76	74 -- 81
no, not capable	105	7	4 -- 11
no, other reason	75	5	2 -- 7
	1433	100	

Students for whom a textbook that emphasizes higher-order thinking would be well suited

	n	%	range of %s
talented students	319	32	29 -- 47
low achievers	12	1	0 -- 32
all students	571	58	39 -- 64
no students	81	8	3 -- 17
	983	99	

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Table III -- Early Stages of Professional Careers
Number and Percent of Respondents to Selected Items, and University Variation

Which of the following best describes you current status?

	n	%	range of %s
classroom teacher	897	59	18 -- 73
other educ.	94	6	2 -- 18
trainer	91	6	2 -- 18
social service	36	2	0 -- 18
full-time student	58	4	0 -- 18
homemaker	68	4	1 -- 11
unemployed	28	2	0 -- 4
other	263	17	0 -- 28
	1531	100	

School type (for those in education)

	n	%	range of %s
public	477	74	22 -- 97
parochial	96	15	3 -- 49
private	68	11	0 -- 30
	641	100	

School setting (for those in education)

	n	%	range of %s
inner city	130	14	3 -- 35
urban	122	14	7 -- 39
suburban	207	23	7 -- 47
town	126	14	9 -- 23
rural	319	35	1 -- 60
	904	100	

School size (for those in education)

	n	%	range of %s
< 300	251	28	18 -- 53
300 - 599	332	37	17 -- 43
600 - 899	170	19	10 -- 27
900 - 1200	77	8	1 -- 14
> 1200	79	9	0 -- 13
	909	101	

School in which you teach located within 50 miles of your

	n	%	range of %s
high school	231	25	7 -- 34
college	140	15	5 -- 41
both	278	31	7 -- 48
neither	261	29	0 -- 77
	910	100	

Is the socioeconomic status of your current students like that of your high school classmates?

	n	%	range of %s
lower	338	37	28 -- 49
higher	109	12	2 -- 49
similar	455	50	25 -- 64
	902	99	

What proportion of the students in your class(es) are from minority ethnic groups?

	n	%	range of %s
< 10%	551	60	15 -- 78
10%	114	12	7 -- 38
25%	112	12	0 -- 41
50%	66	7	3 -- 20
75%	32	4	0 -- 7
> 75%	38	4	0 -- 10
	913	99	

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